

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

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TAGS: PFOR, PINT, SY, LE, XF

SUBJECT: LEBANESE DEVELOPMENTS

REF: (A) DAMASCUS 1445, (B) DAMASCUS 1446, (C) STATE 062097

SUMMARY: I MET WITH CROWN PRINCE HASSAN MORNING MARCH 15. HE HAS BEEN IN TOUCH WITH ASAD AND TALKED TO HIM AGAIN THIS MORNING ON TELEPHONE IN THE MIDDLE OF OUR CONVERSATION. ASAD SEEMS NOW TO BE FOCUSING ON FURTHER STIMULATION OF A CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE BETWEEN LEBANESE FACTIONS AND INCREASED EFFORTS OF MEDIATION. ASAD SEEMED ANXIOUS TO HAVE KING'S SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE AND POSSIBLY TO STIMULATE INTERVENTION BY HUSSEIN WITH CHAMOUN AND HIS GROUP. ASAD REVEALED NO INDICATION OF WHAT KIND OF A SOLUTION IN SUBSTANTIVE TERMS SYRIAN WAS WORKING FOR, ONLY THAT HIS TACTICS WERE DEVOTED TO MEDIATION AND DIALOGUE RATHER THAN, FROM WHAT HE TELLS JORDANIAN CROWN PRINCE, INTERVENTION AND ARMED FORCE. END SUMMARY

1 CROWN PRINCE HASSAN, WHO IS REGENT IN KING'S ABSENCE, CALLED ME EARLY MORNING MARCH 15 AND ASKED ME TO COME BY TO SEE HIM. REFTEL A AND REFTEL B ARRIVED JUST PRIOR TO MY DEPARTURE AND REFTEL C WAS AVAILABLE TO ME ON MY RETURN.

2. HASSAN IMMEDIATELY LAUNCHED INTO A CONVERSATION ON LEBANON. HE TOLD ME THAT HE HAD A CALL IN AT THAT
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MOMENT TO ASAD. (WE WERE SHORTLY INTERRUPTED FOR HIM

TO TAKE THE CALL.) HE SAID THAT KING HAD CALLED ASAD TWO DAYS AGO FROM JAPAN AND THAT HE HAD TALKED WITH ASAD ON THE PHONE YESTERDAY. ASAD HAD SPOKEN IN VERY MODERATE TERMS ABOUT THE CONTINUING NEED TO GET THE PARTIES TALKING TOGETHER. HE GAVE NO PREFERRED SYRIAN COURSE OF ACTION IN TERMS OF DETAILS OF A LEBANESE SETTLEMENT, BUT TOLD HASSAN THAT HE WAS IN DIRECT TOUCH WITH BOTH FRANGIE AND MILITARY COUP LEADER AHDAB. IN CONTACTS WITH BOTH, ASAD TOLD HASSAN THAT HE COUNSELED GETTING IN TOUCH WITH EACH OTHER TO WORK OUT A "SOLUTION."

3. HASSAN SAID FROM HIS UNDERSTANDING OF KING'S TALK WITH ASAD, ASAD WAS TAKING SAME GENERAL MODERATE AND CONSTRUCTIVE LINE WITH REGARD TO LEBANON. AFTER OUR INTERRUPTED CONCERSATION BEGAN AGAIN, (HASSAN HAD TAKEN CALL OUT OF THE ROOM) HE SAID HE HAD SENT KING A CABLE IN TOKYO ON HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH ASAD. HASSAN TOLD ME THAT ASAD SEEMED TO BE FEELING VERY LONELY ABOUT SYRIAN ROLE. HE ASKED WHEN KING WAS RETURNING TO AMMAN, PRESUMABLY, HASSAN SAID, IN ORDER TO BE IN CLOSER AND MORE IMMEDIATE TOUCH WITH KING ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS IN LEBANON. HASSAN TOLD ME THAT ASAD HAD STRESSED HIS (ASAD'S) NEED FOR WIDER SUPPORT IN MEDIATION BETWEEN MAJOR BELANESE CONTENDING PARTIES. ASAD HAD REVIEWED FOR HASSAN HIS UNDERSTANDING OF PRESENT SITUATION. IN CONNECTION WITH BOTH LT. KHATIB OF LEBANESE ARAB ARMY AND COLONEL ANTOINE BARAKAT, WHO APPEARS TO BE PROVIDING MILITARY BACKUP FROM ARMY TO FRANGIE. ASAD'S ASSESSMENT WAS THAT BOTH OF THESE JUNIOR CHARACTERS WOULD FALL INTO LINE WHEN SENIOR LEADERS WERE ABLE TO WORK OUT AN ARRANGEMENT IN LEBANON. ASAD, ACCORDING TO HASSAN STILL SEEMED TO HAVE NO PREFERRED SUBSTANTIVE SOLUTION IN MIND, FOCUSING ON THE TECHNIQUE OF DIALOGUE AS THE NECESSARY STEP.

4. WITHOUT REFERENCE TO ANY OF OUR DISCUSSIONS (REFTELS IN DAMASCUS I ASKED HASSAN IF HE DETECTED IN HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH ASAD ANY INTEREST IN INTERVENING MILITARILY IN SITUATION WITH REGULAR SYRIAN FORCES.

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HASSAN SAID NO THIS WAS NOT HIS IMPRESSION -- THAT HE HAD COUNSELED AHDAB WHO HAD THREATENED MILITARY ACTION THAT HE SHOULD GET TOGETHER WITH FRANGIE AND FORGET RESORTING TO FIGHTING.

5. HASSAN ALSO TOLD ME THAT ASAD SEEMED TO FEEL THAT HIS INFLUENCE IN SAIQA AND THE PLA WAS STILL REASONABLY STRONG BUT THAT FATEH

AND SOME OF THE OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE PLO WERE LESS CERTAIN.

6. HASSAN TOLD ME THAT HE UNDERSTOOD ASAD'S REQUEST FOR HELP IN MEDIATION REFERRED TO KING'S ASSISTANCE IN CONTACTING CHAMOUNISTS. HE EXPECTED THAT KING WOULD DO WHATEVER HE COULD WITH CHAMOUN TO ASSIST ASAD IN RETRIEVING THE SITUATION.

7. HASSAN TOLD ME THAT IT WAS HIS INTERPRETATION OF ASAD'S CANCELLATION OF FRENCH TRIP THAT ANY OTHER COURSE OF ACTION GIVEN SERIOUSNESS OF LEBANESE CRISIS, WOULD HAVE BEEN UNTHINKABLE. ASAD'S LEADERSHIP POSITION IN ARAB WORLD WOULD HAVE SUFFERED GREATLY HAD HE GONE TO FRANCE WHILE SYRIAN EFFORT IN LEBANON REMAINED IN DOUBT BECAUSE OF RECENT EVENTS. HE REPEATED AGAIN HE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT ASAD INTENDED TO MOVE MILITARILY IN LEBANON, BASED ON HIS TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH ASAD THIS MORNING.

8. I EXPECT TO BE IN TOUCH WITH HASSAN AGAIN LATER THIS AFTERNOON TO PURSUE ANY LATE DEVELOPMENTS. IF THERE ARE ANY ASSESSMENTS OR THOUGHTS WHICH YOU WISH TO HAVE ME PASS ON TO HIM, I WILL DO SO. HE SEEMS TO BE ABLE TO REACH ASAD DIRECTLY WITHOUT DIFFICULTY, ALTHOUGH I WOULD NOT OVERESTIMATE HIS PERSONAL INFLUENCE SINCE HE IS A RATHER NEW PLAYER IN THE SYRIAN-JORDANIAN RELATIONSHIP.

9. SUGGEST DEPARTMENT REPEAT DAMASCUS, BEIRUT, TEL AVIV, CAIRO AND JIDDA.
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